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Business Plan Winner Gives Back

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A young company that won the 2010 University of Dayton Business Plan Competition is giving back a portion of those winnings to the University's entrepreneurship program and tapping into the University's business expertise in several ways.

Russell Gottesman and Katie Hill, founders of Commuter Advertising (url: <http://commuter-advertising.com>), have donated \$1,000 of their \$20,000 winnings to support the continued work of the program, which teaches the skills and knowledge needed to start new businesses.

"The guidance, advice and ongoing support the faculty and mentors provided both during and after the competition process have been invaluable to Commuter Advertising's growth," said Gottesman. "We feel we have this wonderful relationship with UD on several different levels and we just want to see it continue and grow."

Hill said: "Anytime an institution like the University of Dayton gives so much support for a start-up business, we really want to take the opportunity to support their program."

Commuter Advertising creates audio advertising for public transit vehicles keyed to specific locations through GPS technology and shares ad revenue with transit systems. The company launched the concept with the Greater Dayton RTA and is expanding to additional cities, including a New York City suburb this summer.

"This is incredibly generous for a young company like Commuter Advertising and completely unprecedented in the history of the Business Plan Competition," said Dean McFarlin, chair of the University's management and marketing department.

McFarlin said there is a rapidly growing interest in the University's business plan competition, which this year attracted 82 entries and more than 170 participants. Total prize money this year grew to \$50,000.

And while the Business Plan Competition continues to assist the company refine and communicate its business strategy to potential investors, other University programs are helping in equally important ways, according to Gottesman.

Gottesman and Hill said they've been especially impressed with the Center for Professional Selling, just launched this month, and the assistance they've received as participants in the Business Plan Competition.

He said the company has hired a total of seven interns – including three students in the professional selling program who started this summer and who have already closed sales deals. Another intern from the management information system program developed a database as a senior class project, he said.

Commuter Advertising has hired two of those students as full-time employees, and Gottesman said he'll work with the MIS department again this year to expand the database project.

Also through the University's connections, Commuter Advertising has been officially invited to enter a prestigious invitation-only international business plan competition, Draper Fisher Jurvetson-Cisco Systems Global Business Plan Competition, which boasts a top prize of \$250,000.

"We thought Commuter Advertising would be a terrific entry for the competition and didn't hesitate to promote them when the Draper Triangle asked us for nominations from our most promising Business Plan Competition entries," McFarlin said.

It's one of only four regional entries selected by the Draper Triangle Ventures group, which is headquartered in Pittsburgh. Other regional invitees include two plans from Carnegie Mellon and one from The Ohio State University. Fourteen finalists will be announced on June 22.

The University of Dayton is nationally recognized for its hands-on approach to developing student entrepreneurs. In 2009, the entrepreneurship program was ranked in the top 10 in the nation for the fourth straight year by The Princeton Review and *Entrepreneur* magazine.